

~~SECRET NOFORN~~NIO/EUR  
10 November 1986NEW TWISTS IN EAST EUROPEAN OPPOSITION MOVEMENTS

A recent Washington Post article on the "Freedom and Peace" dissident group in Poland highlighted the bolder initiatives of a new, mainly younger "wave" of anti-regime dissidents there.

- The article charted the rise of the group since 1985 to its recent campaign of sit-ins, boycotts and fasts to support members jailed for refusing to take the military oath of allegiance to the USSR.

One important aspect of the phenomenon -- unmentioned by the Post -- is that it is widespread in East Europe and growing in scope and impact.

Developments in dissident communities in Hungary, Yugoslavia, East Germany and Czechoslovakia show some similar tendencies to those described in Poland.

- Many younger dissidents tend to take bold thematic whacks at the power structure -- directly challenging the Soviet Union or the local military/internal security complex.
- They prefer to affiliate only on projects of choice and avoid organizational/ideological straightjackets in favor of nebulous goals -- such as the "civil society" idea energizing Slovene dissidents.
- They distrust charismatic leaders, eschew contacts with the authorities and foreswear any intent to share power in the system.

Many of these characteristics show the influence of the "Greens" in West Europe and, like the Greens, the new dissidents in the East seem to have only a limited base of popular support on specific issues. But as "wooly" as they may sound, they are having an impact beyond their numbers which suggests they can claim substantial broad sympathy -- at least among the youth.

- In Hungary, much of the environmental "Blue movement," which for years impeded the massive new dam on the Danube, and the anti-draft effort is of this stripe.
- Our Consulate in Zagreb credits the small Slovene "alternative movements" with forcing key issues like defense spending and the morality of Yugoslavia's arms sales into the national limelight. They also opened a debate on military service which recently culminated in the reduction of the draft from eighteen to twelve months.

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The vigor of this new dissident strategy in part stems from the younger generation's deepening frustrations with the system and the compromises necessary to "get by". Their actions are a sharp break with existing movements like Solidarity and Charter 77, which practice measured pursuit of long-term goals.

The outlook for this new dissidence should not be all that bright given the regimes' demonstrated ability to keep such a polyglot opposition off-balance, divided and isolated. But so far, the power centers have not come up with a formula for containing these movements without making martyrs and further alienating their youth. And the USSR also has a dilemma -- how to stifle these pacifists without undercutting the credibility of its peace campaigns in West Europe.

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